Pastoral and mythic patterns in Mark Harris's The Southpaw

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Pastoral and mythic patterns
in Mark Harris's The Southpaw

by

Dennis Michael Healy

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASEBALL AS A SUITABLE MEDIUM FOR THE AMERICAN PASTORAL</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASEBALL AND LITERARY REGIONALISM</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASEBALL AS A VERSION OF PASTORAL IN AMERICAN LITERATURE: NINETEENTH CENTURY RESISTANCE AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ACCEPTANCE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Mark Harris has written four baseball novels which have as narrator and protagonist Henry Wiggen, a left-handed pitcher. *The Southpaw* (1953) traces the first twenty-one years of Henry's life, from childhood through the first full season in the major leagues. *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1956) covers the 1955 season, Henry's fourth, and special attention is given to his relationship with teammate Bruce Pearson, who is dying from Hodgkin's Disease. *A Ticket for a Seamstitch* (1956) describes the events of the first half of the 1956 season, in which Henry must deal with excessive fan worship and the pressure of setting a major league record for consecutive wins. The fourth novel in the series, *It Looked Like Forever* (1979), shifts to the 1971 season when Henry, after being released by the Mammoths, makes an ill-fated comeback as a 40 year-old relief pitcher. These novels have lately been labeled as literary representations of the American pastoral myth:

> The game of baseball, as Harris develops it through Wiggen's mind, is a version of pastoral—a microcosmic, slightly simplified version of society stylized and shaped into a formal mode.1

Yet this critic does not fully explore either the means by which baseball becomes identified with the American pastoral tradition or other literary traditions which Harris exploits in the Wiggen novels.

The present study, therefore, is undertaken to show how the first of the Henry Wiggen novels, *The Southpaw*, is a mid-twentieth century representation of the American pastoral. Toward that end, the discussion opens with an explanation of the factors which validate the use of the sport of
baseball as a vehicle for the American pastoral in literature. It will treat the historical link which baseball has with the development of the pastoral tradition in America and the characteristics which baseball shares with mid-nineteenth century forms of pastoral literature, including the presentation of an idealized past, the potential within the environment for heroic action, and the potential for the development of a heroic figure. The development in the twentieth century of a closer relationship between the game of baseball and pastoral forms of literature is also examined.

The study then focuses on the pastoral and Adamic myths in The Southpaw. These elements will be examined in conjunction with two other novels, Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), a representation of late nineteenth century American pastoral, and John R. Tunis's The Kid from Tomkinsville (1940), a representation of the adolescent pastoral and heroic myths of the middle decades of the twentieth century. These two works were chosen for two reasons: they embody the pastoral and Adamic myths of their respective genres, and since Henry Wiggen mentions reading works by both Twain and Tunis, it can be assumed that his perceptions are to some degree influenced by these writers.

The discussion concludes with an attempt to determine to what extent The Southpaw maintains or denies American pastoral and Adamic mythic patterns in the second half of the twentieth century.
BASEBALL AS A SUITABLE MEDIUM FOR THE EXPRESSION OF THE AMERICAN PASTORAL

That the sport of baseball should serve as an appropriate vehicle for the expression of the American pastoral at first seems inconsistent with the more traditional expressions of pastoral in our literature. Unsettled, unspoiled, timeless spaces away from urban areas have generally provided the physical setting for pastoral tales. And although the pastoral tradition seems far removed from the world of sport, an examination of baseball's origins, early development, and the game's spatial and temporal character reveals its affinity with other pastoral forms.

It is more than coincidental that the dates attributed to the rise of American industrialism and the establishment of the essential rules of baseball almost coincide: 1844 for the former, 1845 for the latter. In fact, the growth and development of baseball in America almost directly parallel the rise of industrialism in this country. It is also important to note that while the growth of baseball and of industrialism was slowed during the Civil War, both experienced "boom" periods in the decades after that conflict. The tremendous industrial growth of the post-war period produced countless job opportunities, especially in cities. Many who came to the city seeking employment were from rural areas. Often these people sought entertainment as well as employment, and for some, baseball fulfilled leisure-time needs.

One factor which attracted city-dwellers to baseball was the sense of identifying with something:
One had to fit into a crowd, at the bank, office or union hall, at the saloon or temperance meeting, at the yacht harbor or ball park. The latter crowd was easily enough joined. While admission charges for a good game went from 10 cents at the war's end to a quarter in 1870, it was still affordable. A little reading through the sporting papers could make a new fan sound like a native so far as knowledge of the team was concerned.5

But baseball provided more than a means of socialization for city-dwellers of the post-Civil War period. It can be suggested that baseball also gave them a glimpse of the pastoral. Participant or spectator could become part of a simple, harmonious world. For many of those attracted to the game, baseball symbolized the rural antebellum world of their childhood, a world from which they were separated by space and time. An analysis of the spatial and temporal elements of the game reveals how it may well have fulfilled the urge for the pastoral.

Spatially, baseball provides for the observer a playing surface which expands from the most compressed area of activity (pitcher's mound to home plate) to its broadest (the outfield). This sense of gradual expansion gives the game an aspect of spaciousness:

A kind of controlled openness is created by having everything fan out from home plate, and the crowd sees the game through an arranged perspective that is rarely violated. Visually, this means that the game is always seen as a constant, rather calm, whole . . . .6

Another spatial element identified by the same writer is the dominance of circular movement in the game. One scores by circling the bases and returning home. The measured units of the game are called "innings" rather than "outings," further emphasizing the idea of completing the
circuit by coming in (returning home) as opposed to going out (leaving home). A player is not penalized, and is sometimes rewarded for hitting the ball out of the playing area. If the ball is hit in foul territory and is not caught, the player remains at bat. If he hits it out of the playing area in fair territory, a home run, he is allowed to circle the bases, score a run, and return home. Spatially, then, the playing area and patterns of movement are designed to produce completeness and security for the observer, both important elements in the creation of a pastoral setting.

Temporally, the game is consistent with the pastoral handling of time. There is no time limit; the game is played until it is completed (darkness and curfew being the exceptions). And players circle the bases in a counter clockwise direction, simulating the turning back of time. The game is played on a green field, implying eternal spring. Thus, baseball's resistance to the passage of time enables it to present "an alternative to a world of too much action, struggle, and change."8

In sum, the game of baseball

... with its clean serenity, its open space, and its ritualized action is enough to place it in a world of yesterday. Baseball evokes for us a past which may never have been ours, but which we believe was ... 9

Thus, baseball's essentially pastoral character had to appeal to the masses flocking to cities in post-Civil War America. Its presentation of a timeless, "natural" world enabled players and spectators to recall a world left behind in the wake of a war and a rising industrial nation.
It is significant that while baseball was becoming a popular sport in post-Civil War America, the literary movement known as regionalism was approaching its most fruitful period. It is even more important to note that the content of much of the regional literature reflected the same yearning for the pastoral that baseball did. Regardless of the region of America being written about, expression of the pastoral urge was similar. The regionalists "gave their audiences the ideal materials with which to romantically reconstruct the past felicity of a paradise now lost." Many of the regionalists, in observing the rapid standardization of life after the war, found that the most effective means of capturing the uniqueness of their territory was to recapture it—to turn back the clock and present it in the earlier pastoral state.

The rise of baseball, occurring simultaneously with the rise of regionalism, can be seen as a conductor of the pastoral tradition in America. It presented for its less sophisticated audience a living theatre of the pastoral, a visual representation of an idealized past. While the reading public turned to regional literature for a rediscovery of the past, the less educated masses of city dwellers found it in the sport of baseball.

If baseball produced in visual terms a world similar to the one produced in regional fiction, it must now be seen whether baseball, like the work of regional writers, is capable of producing situations necessary for a heroic figure who is a suitable representative of the pastoral tradition.
This figure is known in American literary history as the American Adam, and by defining his quest, the tensions which exist in his world become clear:

... the American hero as Adam takes his start outside the world, remote or on its verges; its power, its fashions, and its history are precisely the forces he must learn, must master or be mastered by ... the hero of the new world has no home to begin with, but he seeks one to come.

According to this definition there are three essential qualities of the Adamic figure's journey: the hero beginning his journey alone, cut off from his past, the confrontation with forces affecting his world, and his effort to achieve knowledge of the self and to find a home within the pastoral environment.

As a representative of regionalist writers, Mark Twain captures the patterns mentioned above in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. His hero, Huck, is set adrift alone on his journey into the larger world down the Mississippi River. Along the way he encounters social, cultural and personal forces which threaten his integration with the world of the river. Ultimately, he is forced to make a critical decision which will bind him either to the pastoral world he prefers (symbolized by the raft and the river) or to the world he has struggled against (symbolized by life on the shore). The great tension between these two worlds makes the environment in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn a suitable background for Huck's Adamic quest.

The pastoral world of baseball in the late nineteenth century also produced conditions suitable for the development of an Adamic figure. This
is best revealed by examining the role of the player within the framework of the game.

On the field the player, clad in a white uniform, symbolizes youth, innocence, and purity. His activity is play—running, throwing, hitting. When the player enters the field he cuts himself off from past experience and confronts the world alone, like the Adamic figure. No one can run for him, throw for him, hit for him. While in the pastoral setting, his suitability to the environment is measured. His speed, strength, concentration, and courage are all tested. He either becomes part of the environment by progressing toward "home," or he is dismissed from it by striking out, being put out, or being forced out by the actions of a teammate. His performance, like the performance of the Adamic figure, determines his suitability to the new Eden.

In the late nineteenth century, baseball, like literary regionalism, generated a proper background for the development of the Adamic figure, but it would not be until the twentieth century that baseball would become the subject of serious fiction.
BASEBALL AS A VERSION OF PASTORAL IN AMERICAN LITERATURE:
NINETEENTH CENTURY RESISTANCE AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ACCEPTANCE

Given the similarities which existed between the pastoral worlds created in baseball and regional literature of the nineteenth century, it seems odd that they did not join and produce fiction about baseball. Yet in the nineteenth century, there were many who saw baseball not as a representation of the pastoral, but as a serious threat to the moral and cultural development of the country.

Moral objections to baseball came from many religious groups, but the strongest opposition came from the Sabbatarians, who believed that declining attendance at Sunday services was caused by the attraction of other Sunday events like circuses, museum tours, and athletic events, especially baseball. Since baseball drew people away from the churches, the Sabbatarians viewed the game as a heathen activity, a threat to religious values. They made a strong effort to stop Sunday games. Their fight was extensive, for, "From the 1870s to the turn of the century there were hundreds of court and legislative battles involving Sunday sports, and the fight continued in many cities well into this century." The vehemence of the Sabbatarians' protest against Sunday baseball shows the reluctance of the religious community to accept baseball as exemplifying the pastoral ideal.

Another segment of society which looked with disdain on the rise of baseball was the athletic establishment of the upper classes. They objected to baseball on the grounds that it was a vulgar and brutish game, too violent for genteel tastes. The upper class resentment of
baseball is summarized in an editorial which appeared in the August 30, 1881, edition of the New York Times: "baseball was in the beginning a sport worthy of men, and . . . it is now, in its fully developed state, unworthy of gentlemen."\(^{13}\)

The opposition to baseball by Sabbatarians (themselves middle class) and the athletic establishment of the upper class helped to deny baseball as an appropriate subject for "serious" literature. These two groups both represented segments of society which formed the reading public in the late nineteenth century. Objection to baseball from within the classes that read significant fiction would have had an adverse effect upon the game's chances of becoming the subject of a major literary work.

It was not until the twentieth century that baseball gained enough respectability to successfully enter the literature of America. This change was brought about by at least three factors: increasing popularity of the game in nearly every segment of society; the increasing acceptability of baseball by the middle and upper classes; and the increasing coverage of baseball by newspapers and periodicals.

Contrary to the observation in the 1881 New York Times editorial cited previously, baseball in fact underwent a remarkable expansion after the turn of the century. It began to have significance in nearly all areas of American life:

Its terminology infiltrated the language. It became the theme of a growing sub-literature, and songs were written about it. Newspapers, sporting-goods manufacturers, railroads, hotels, and other businesses found they had a stake in its success. It was equated with Americanism,
In the relatively few years between 1845 and 1900, baseball had evolved from a player-owned, non-profit venture into a corporate business designed to generate capital. Professional leagues became distinct from amateur leagues. Players now made their livelihood solely by playing the game. Baseball's pervasiveness had captured the attention of America.

A second factor which made baseball a more respected sporting activity was the greater acceptance of the game by the privileged classes. Although the general feeling persisted among the upper classes that baseball was a lowbrow activity, some members of the "social register" were finally coming out to the ball game. When they did, baseball's advocates made the most of it:

... baseball owners and sportswriters were at pains, almost to the point of protesting too much, to give assurance that all types, occupations, and classes patronized the game. They emphasized that not only laborers turned out but also merchants, members of the learned professions, the "hot-house social butterfly," and the "grave minister of the gospel."15

Box seats, often cushioned and in shaded areas of the stadium, were designed to attract a more genteel audience. And the presence of public figures at games further enhanced its growing acceptance among the upper classes. A crowning example of this is the tradition of the opening day ceremony: "... beginning with William Howard Taft, Presidents have
rarely missed the opportunity to become just 'plain folks' by throwing out the first ball on opening day in Washington.\(^\text{16}\) The relaxation of criticism and condescension toward baseball by the upper class at the turn of the century increased the possibility of a union between baseball and literature.

The third factor which contributed to the eventual union of baseball and fiction was the increase in print media coverage given to sports in general and to baseball in particular:

A study of the leading paper of a representative American town revealed that the relative amount of space given to organized sports jumped from 4 per cent of total news content in 1890 to 16 per cent in 1923.\(^\text{17}\)

Baseball periodicals like the *Sporting News*, which began publication in the nineteenth century, found it difficult to cope with increasing numbers of professional and minor league baseball teams at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact "*Sporting News* was so pressed for space that many of the minor leagues complained about lack of coverage."\(^\text{18}\) Press services so expanded coverage that "By 1913 the Associated Press had wires strung across the continent with loops running into every major league park and into scores of afternoon newspaper offices."\(^\text{19}\) This tremendous increase in baseball coverage by the media prepared America for the rise of baseball literature.

The early popular forms of baseball writing appeared in books and periodicals aimed at boys:
In a five-year span 1910-1914 the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature listed a peak total of 249 titles about baseball. Players were made larger than life in articles with titles such as 'The Hard Job of a Baseball Star,' 'Clean Living and Quick Thinking,' and "How the Ball Players of the Big League Live and Act When off the Diamond." These articles helped create the myth of the baseball player as hero: "... individuals of character, ordinary Joes despite their exalted positions: modest, yet tough virile American males..." This myth established in non-fiction in the first two decades of the twentieth century, was perpetuated when the adolescent baseball novel achieved popularity in the early 1940s. Perhaps the most representative author of this genre was John R. Tunis, who wrote a number of baseball novels for adolescents between 1940 and 1960. The novels of Tunis and other writers in this vein typically record the heroic development of a young major league baseball player, and, in the process, inject the myth of the baseball hero into American fiction.

Despite the spate of baseball writing for adolescents in the first half of the twentieth century, there is a surprising scarcity of adult baseball fiction during this same period. An acclaimed exception was Ring Lardner's You Know Me, Al (1914). One important achievement of this novel is the portrayal of the big league player. Lardner was...

The first important writer to debunk the conventional concept of the ball player... This typical player was an insensitive, oafish braggart, who rejected advice--'I don't think he can learn me nothing'--and possessed an inexhaustible supply of alibis for his failures on the field.
Lardner, then, broke ranks with the standard heroic portrayal of the ball-player. However, narrator Jack Keefe's use of the vernacular makes *You Know Me, Al* reminiscent of earlier heroic tradition in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. But because of Keefe's mediocrity (he has only a fair record for an average team) he lacks the heroic qualities of both Huck and the heroes of adolescent baseball fiction. Lardner's work, in its effort to capture the language of baseball and debunk the myth of the hero, represents a movement toward realism in adult baseball fiction.
Several significant literary representations of the American pastoral and Adamic myths converge at the middle of the twentieth century, when *The Southpaw* (1953) was published. First, the literary link between the pastoral world presented by baseball and the pastoral world depicted in traditional fiction is finally forged in the twentieth century, when baseball is gradually assimilated into all levels of culture. Second, the Adamic myth informing nineteenth century American literature was easily transferred to baseball fiction in the twentieth century, was perpetuated in adolescent fiction and debunked in certain adult baseball fiction.

*The Southpaw* is a version of the pastoral because it incorporates elements of traditional as well as modern pastoral and Adamic myths. To illustrate the blending of mythic patterns in *The Southpaw*, it will be compared to *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Kid from Tomkinsville* with regard to the three primary stages of Adamic development: humble or obscure origin and the significance of early experience as preparation for the larger world ahead; the Adamic figure's physical displacement from the past and the rites of initiation which occur as he enters the larger pastoral environment; and the immersion of the Adamic figure into the pastoral world.

Henry Wiggen, narrator and protagonist of *The Southpaw*, is a small-town boy. He establishes the rustic quality of his hometown, Perkinsville, New York, by describing how to get there:
you get an Albany train out of Grand Central Station. About halfway to Albany the conductor comes down the isle [sic] mumbling 'Perkinsville.' Then the train slows and you got to be quick because most of them don't exactly stop in Perkinsville . . . you just throw your bags clear and you swing down off on the cement platform and you fall away the way the train is going, and then you go back for your bags. Now you are in Perkinsville. (T.S., p. 13)

Henry is described by one critic as "the classic country bumpkin of folklore." His humble beginnings are consistent with those of the Adamic hero.

Huckleberry Finn is also a small-town boy. St. Petersburg, patterned after Hannibal, was described by Mark Twain as a "distant boy paradise." Like Perkinsville, it is small and unassuming.

Roy Tucker, the young protagonist of The Kid from Tomkinsville, hails from Tomkinsville, Connecticut, also a small town. He lives on a farm two and one-half miles from town.

All three characters are small-town boys and, thus, share the Adamic characteristic of a humble beginning.

A second factor to consider in the development of the young Adamic figure is his rejection of standard processes of socialization, and his preference for the pastoral world he seeks to join. And the most significant socializing force which the Adamic figure rejects is formal education.

Henry Wiggen describes his disillusion with schooling in the following passage:

If I was to tell you all the things that went against my grain in school it would take a book. I would start
in the fall, and the first thing that would happen would be that the World Series come up. It is impossible to sit in school when the World Series is going on, and I would lam out of there and sneak down to Berelli's and set towards the back on the shoe-shine chair not far from the radio. (T.S., p. 28)

Huck had similar feelings toward school: "At first I hated school, but by and by I got so I could stand it. Whenever I got uncommon tired I played hookey . . ." (H.F., p. 210). Like Henry, when Huck is distracted or bored, he does not conform to the norm; he must follow his impulse and return to the world he prefers.

Roy Tucker makes no mention of early disdain for schooling, but like Henry and Huck, his future does not rest on academic advancement. Like Henry, he begins his "career" immediately after graduating from high school.

Another significant element in the early development of the Adamic hero is the performance of rituals which prefigure or foreshadow the skills he must possess when he enters the larger world.

Henry Wiggen realized that one of the keys to achieving the success he dreamed of and read about in adolescent books (he says that he read books by John R. Tunis) was hard work. He not only works hard to learn the lessons his father teaches him, but he is also willing to work alone. Yet his work is actually play—an imaginary game of baseball. Henry describes it: "Another crazy thing I done as a kid was I pitched about 5,000 games of baseball against the back of the house with a rubber ball. I had a regular system . . . . It was all very real to me" (T.S., p. 23).

There is a significant point to be made about Henry's imaginary game, and it is described in a study on the importance of play in
It is playing as a child which makes it possible for him to become more mature. He who concentrates on being fully what he is, is best enabled to become what he is not yet.26

Playing like this enables Henry to concentrate on what he wants to become.

It also prepares him for play as an adult:

Play is all-absorbing, both for the child and the athlete . . . . Play allows the child to discover where it stops and the world begins, but the athlete, by keeping his activities confined within the accepted frame of the game, goes on to learn who he is and what he can do.27

Thus, Henry is not only practicing skills, he is practicing being a hero. He is ritually fulfilling the fantasy he has created for himself: the fantasy of the baseball hero.

Huck Finn reluctantly engages in fantasy rituals. Although he participates in the raid on the Sunday school picnic, the "A-rabs" of Tom Sawyer's imagination, he later rejects the fantasy: "I judged that all that stuff was only just one of Tom Sawyer's lies. I reckoned he believed in the A-rabs and the elephants, but as for me, I think different. It had all the marks of a Sunday-school" (H.F., p. 209). In this passage it is Tom Sawyer who more closely resembles Henry Wiggen. Tom has based his fantasies on the reading he has done—adventure stories and romances rather than baseball novels. Despite Huck's skepticism, his willingness to participate in the fantasy ritual with the Tom Sawyer Gang helps to prepare him for the highly romanticized escape plan by which he and Tom
finally "free" Jim.

In *The Kid from Tomkinsville* ritual fantasy play is also present. After Roy Tucker is injured in a freak locker room accident midway through his rookie season (he was 15-0 as a pitcher at the time), he returns home and vows to make a comeback as a hitter. During the winter months of the offseason he drives himself toward that goal:

Anyone who managed to drive a sleigh up the snowy road . . . and saw the device in the barn behind the house, thought he had lost his mind. It looked like a fence, a structure of boards about four inches wide and four feet high, on top of which he placed a baseball.

The ball was attached by a string so that when hit, it flew ten yards and bounced back. Standing at right angles to this board he could practice hitting alone. (*K.T.*, pp. 248-49)

He practices in the mornings before going to work, envisioning and ritually enacting the physical and mental qualities that will take him back to the major leagues.

For each Adamic figure, ritual play becomes a significant childhood act. The combination of physical and mental rehearsal prepared each for later struggles.

A final characteristic which enhances the heroic possibilities of the Adamic protagonist is his early affinity with the pastoral world.

As Henry Wiggen learns to play baseball, he feels at home on the field, especially his portion of the field, the pitcher's mound:

In a few years I was ready for the regulation distance, and we went out in the field across the road and
measured it off--60 feet 6 inches--and after I got used to it it seemed like that distance was a part of nature. It was natural. (T.S., p. 27)

Just after Henry receives word that he is being called up to the major leagues, his minor league manager tells him, "'You are a natural ball-player.'" In short, Henry possesses an unusual fitness for the pastoral world of baseball.

Huck Finn has a natural preference for life on the raft. He says, "There warn't no home like a raft, after all . . . . You feel mighty free and easy on a raft" (H.F., pp. 340-41).

Roy Tucker also shows a natural relationship to the environment he desires. He is told by a veteran catcher that he has "a natural, easy motion."

In all three characters, natural abilities and natural affinities are present. Their unusually easy integration with the pastoral world sets them apart from the common man.

In their origins, their rejection of socializing forces, and their affinity to the pastoral, Henry, Huck, and Roy share common characteristics of the Adamic figure in childhood.

The passage from the early state of innocence into the world of experience is a common element in the Adamic pattern. It consists of three stages: death of the child-like innocent self, birth of the new self, and rites of initiation into the new world of experience. Each of the protagonists goes through this process.

Henry Wiggen makes his passage to the larger pastoral world on a
train. (Ironically, the machine takes the young Adam to the garden.) On this journey, the old self dies. Eighteen, just out of high school on his way to his first spring training after signing a bonus contract for $4,000 and a new automobile, Henry's first comment about the journey suggests death: "On the train between Perkinsville and New York, I was dead from hunger" (T.S., p. 71). Later, during a stopover in New York City, Henry is made fully aware of his lack of identity. He stops in the team's offices, assuming he will be well-known. But a records keeper sets him straight. He shows Henry a file cabinet full of player profiles and says, "'They are just names. Your name is somewhere amongst them. How do we know who you are except just a name? You are but another name'" (T.S., p. 73).

For Huck, the passage to the larger world occurs first in the canoe he uses to escape from his father, then later on the raft, which provides passage between the river and the shore. Like Henry, Huck suffers loss of identity when he sets out in the canoe. He has already created his own death in Pap's cabin and as he moves along the river, he uses aliases at every major stop along the way.

Roy Tucker, like Henry, makes his passage to the world of experience on a train. Like Henry, he feels the ritual loss of identity as he boards the train for Florida. The conductor refers to him as "that kid from Tomkinsville" (K.T., p. 4), and Roy realizes what is happening as he thinks of his friends: "Only a minute before he had wished them all a million miles away. Now they were his last link with Grandma and Tomkinsville" (K.T., pp. 4-5).
Consistent with the American Adamic pattern, Henry, Huck, and Roy are separated from childhood and must create new selves in the larger world. But they must first be reborn.

All three characters experience rebirth, with the appropriate water symbol present in each case. Henry is reborn in Aqua Clara, Florida, during spring training, itself a renewal ritual. The symbolic place name strengthens the idea of rebirth and also carries the idea of purity (or innocence) retained. Huck's rebirth occurs because water (the Mississippi River) carries him to Jackson's Island, where he sees the townspeople's search for his old self end in failure. Roy Tucker, like Henry, is reborn in Clearwater, Florida, during spring training. Like Henry, his rebirth has the hint of the miraculous, for in one day he has traveled from the deadness of New England winter to the eternal spring of southern Florida.

Establishment of the new self requires more than rebirth; it requires action by the Adamic figure which gives the new self identity. This action comes through the rites of initiation which the character must undergo.

The great early test for Henry comes in proving himself as a ballplayer in spring training. He receives an early setback in a rookies versus regulars game when Sid Goldman of the regulars hits a tape-measure home run off Henry (the ball travels 591 feet, four feet farther than Babe Ruth's major league record home run, according to Henry). After the game, Henry feels that he has experienced another death. Not only has he been tagged for a colossal home run, but he is also the losing pitcher. As he lies on his bed in the rookie barracks with his jacket over his head, his rookie teammates come in and start to talk. Henry
reacts: "It was like I was in a coffin and the people was walking around and whispering and saying, 'It is too bad he has passed to the great beyond so young'" (T.S., pp. 92-3). But that very evening Henry is reborn again. He signs a season contract and is assigned to the team's top minor league farm team. He is sent to the minors not because he lacks ability, but because of flaws in his technique. A film of his performance shows that he tips off his pitches by failing to conceal the ball, and the charts kept by the statisticians show that he does not "mix" his pitches well enough. The modern baseball world is revealed here. Raw talent is not enough to succeed in the major leagues; technical perfection is also demanded. Henry needs more preparation before he can make final passage into the world of his dreams.

Huck is also tested early in his new life. Just before he and Jim discover they have missed Cairo and their journey south becomes a sobering reality, Huck's loyalty to Jim and the world of the raft is tested when slave hunters approach the raft. Originally set on turning Jim over to them, Huck cannot do it: "I tried to, but the words wouldn't come. I tried for a second or two to brace up and out with it, but I warn't man enough . . . so I just give up trying . . ." (H.F., p. 310). Huck's "failure" to turn Jim over to the slave hunters exemplifies his desire to remain part of the pastoral world of the raft. Like Henry, Huck survives an early threat against his union with the pastoral.

Roy Tucker also receives an early challenge to his new selfhood. Like Henry, he has a disastrous beginning in spring training in a rookies versus regulars game. He gives up seven runs (including a home run) in
three innings. But instead of getting technical analysis, he gets a pep
talk from a veteran catcher. After reassuring Roy about his ability, the
catcher expounds on the secret of success in baseball, a secret passed to
him by an old-timer: "'Courage is all life. Courage is all baseball.
And baseball is all life; that's why it gets under your skin'" (K.T.,
p. 80). Roy is inspired by the talk. After the veteran leaves, he jumps
from his chair and vows to show them tomorrow. And show them he does. He
pitches six innings of one-hit ball in an exhibition game and earns a
spot on the Dodgers.

Roy's rookie triumph represents a clear divergence with the develop­
mental patterns of Roy and Henry. Henry's failure to make the parent team
is handled carefully by Mark Harris, for it is by a technical flaw, not a lack
of ability, that he fails to make the grade. Tunis, writing in a genre
in which the myth of success is more readily accepted, can permit his
hero to move up instantly. Harris thus presents the complexity of Henry's
world without sacrificing or diminishing Henry's natural abilities.

After less than two years in the minor leagues, Henry is called up
to play for the New York Mammoths. He has now reached the same develop­
mental stage that Huck and Roy have attained. All three Adamic figures
are now past the stages of initiation and must now face the world of
experience.

The final immersion of the Adamic hero into the larger pastoral
world involves threats and pressures more complex than those of his
initiation. They create tensions which ultimately determine his heroic
stature. The world in which this tension is generated will be broken
down into three sections: the game or the river, representing the ideal pastoral; the teammates or Jim, representing intimate society; and the fans and owners or the people on the shore, representing the larger social world.

Once Henry gets to the major leagues near the very end of the season, he immediately develops a communion with the game environment. In his first appearance, after facing only two batters, he is "at home": "Now I was relaxed. It was like I was always up there, like I was there all my life, with the Mammoths ... and I was no more nervous then if I was back in the Legion League in Perkinsville" (T.S., p. 122). He realizes that the world is all before him when he tells a rookie teammate, "I guess we are sitting on top of the world, away up in the clouds, and the gate is open and the music is playing" (T.S., p. 123). Henry fulfills this prophecy the next season, his official rookie season. He wins consistently. He has all the tools of a great pitcher: speed, control, instinct, and intelligence. In his first full season (he is the youngest player on the team—21 on the Fourth of July) he leads the Mammoths, third the previous season, to a pennant.

Yet the length of the season and the intensity of the pennant race produce serious challenges to Henry's ethical standards as a player (he does not drink, smoke, or stay out late). At one point during an extra-inning game, Sam Yale, another pitcher and Henry's biggest boyhood idol, offers Henry "a special salt pill." Henry, after initially putting it in his pocket, takes it later in a tight spot in a game. The Mammoths win the game in sixteen innings. In another critical situation, Henry
again compromises his ethical standards. Suffering from stiffness in his back, he cannot throw his curve effectively. In order to win, he resorts to an illegal pitch: "That is what you call a spitter. It is outlawed from baseball . . . you can kill a man with a spitter if you hit him right. You do not have it under full control. All this I knewed, and I did not care" (T.S., p. 280). The spitter works. Henry strikes out the batter and the Mammoths win the game.

These two instances show Henry's increasing willingness to compromise his ethics in order to win. As Holly Webster, Henry's girl friend, tells him, "'You are losing your manhood faster than hell!'" (T.S., p. 287). In going outside the rules, he has placed domination above integration with his world. The compromises Henry makes threaten his heroic development and create the major crisis in The Southpaw, for if he does not play within the accepted framework of the game, he will not learn who he is or what he can do.

Huck Finn's integration with the pastoral world of the raft is also threatened by a moral and ethical crisis. The problem of freeing Jim is the ultimate test of Huck's allegiance to the classless, fraternal world he and Jim share. Huck's crisis, like Henry's, is generated by stress.

Roy Tucker's integration is threatened not by moral, but physical circumstances. After winning his fifteenth consecutive game as a rookie pitcher, Roy falls in the shower (his teammates were "horsing around, slapping each other with the ends of wet towels" (K.T., p. 190)), and
injures his pitching elbow. He is through as a pitcher. But over the winter months, through perseverance and hard work, he develops hitting skills and decides to try to make the team as an outfielder. He does. He hits over .300, and in the game that decides the pennant, he scores the tying and winning runs and saves the game with a spectacular catch. In Roy's heroics, physical tension dominates. In scoring the winning run, he suffers a deep cut on his leg but returns to the game. Moments later he crashes into the wall making the game-saving catch and has to be carried off the field on a stretcher.

Threats to Roy's integration come from physical complications. His integrity is never in question. His status as an untainted hero remains intact.

As they enter the larger world of experience, all three protagonists face identity crises. The measure of their heroism comes with their ability to meet these challenges in a way which at once makes them more self-complete and more at one with their pastoral worlds.

A second element to consider in each character's immersion into the pastoral is the intimate society of that world. For Henry and Roy, it is represented by their teammates; for Huck, it is represented by Jim. The characters who make up the intimate society will test the pastoral ideals of friendship and brotherhood.

For Henry, friendship is important. At one point when a teammate is sent to the minors, Henry realizes that while he is not a great ballplayer, he "... is a first-rate friend ... sometimes I think friendship is more important than being an immortal" (T.S., p. 217). Henry values
friendship but he finds few true friends. Although he plays with a winning team, unity exists only on the field, and even that breaks down as pressure builds during the season. Away from the field, fragmentation and aloofness are common. Henry begins the season rooming with a black player, but when another black joins the team, the blacks room together. Off the field, the team resembles the larger society; it is diverse, indifferent, cold. "Butch" Schnell, manager of the Mammoths, recognizes the lack of unity when he says, "'I get so damn sick and tired of different ballplayers with different kinds of personality. Why in hell do they have to have all different kinds of personality. Why in hell ain't they all the same?'" (T.S., p. 237).

Team unity erodes during the pennant race. Team members become tense and the pressure to win distorts the principles of fair play associated with the game. Henry tells Holly, "'Things are tight . . . terrible tight. Every pitch is cash, Holly. Big cash. Not only my cash, but the cash of all the boys . . . this is for keeps. This ain't no playground baseball!'" (T.S., p. 287). The players do not relax until the pennant is won. But by then, the myth of team unity is debunked.

For Huck, the intimate world of the pastoral is more restricted. Unity is found in Huck's relationship with Jim, but not without several trials, the greatest of which occurs when Huck tricks Jim into believing that their separation in the fog was just Jim's dream. Huck regains Jim's friendship by humbling himself to Jim, and after that, their bond becomes stronger. It becomes so strong that Huck is willing to violate the norms of the larger society to preserve it. For Huck, the myth of fraternity
survives through Jim.

The fraternal myth remains intact for Roy Tucker as it did for Huck. Players on Roy's team encourage each other and associate both on and off the field. The concept of total team unity is driven home when Roy's team, the Dodgers, has a squad meeting before the final regular season game that will decide the pennant. The spatial positioning of those at the meeting represents hierarchical order and unity. After the manager comes into the locker room, the scene is complete:

Just behind [the manager] stood McManus [the owner] nervously lighting a cigarette, and Bill Hanson, the business manager, peered over the heads from a distant corner. The whole family; behind the circle fluttered old Chisebeak, his arms full of dirty clothes.

Dave [the manager] looked around. At the men with their arms on each other's shoulders. At those standing expectantly in front of their lockers, arms on their hips, at the four or five seated cross-legged on the floor. He waited until silence covered them. (K.T., pp. 312, 315)

United after the manager's inspirational speech, the Dodgers win the pennant. In The Kid from Tomkinsville, it is team unity which produces victory. In The Southpaw, the team wins despite its lack of unity.

The larger society, which lies outside the immediate pastoral world of the Adamic figure, also poses a threat to the successful integration of the hero. Henry Wiggen experiences the threat from two segments of the larger society: the fans and the team owners.

Henry's cynicism toward the fans is expressed in the "Dedication" of The Southpaw. He had placed himself in a bad light with the press and
With that statement, as with the gesture mentioned earlier, Henry declares his independence of the forces of the larger society which threaten to control his actions and usurp his identity in the pastoral environment of baseball.

Huckleberry Finn is closely allied with Henry in his experiences with the larger society. For Huck, it is the society of the shore, and every landing exposes hypocrisy, ignorance and violence. The Colonel Sherburn episode, the Shepherdson-Grangerford feud, the Wilks family difficulties all reveal to Huck that he cannot finally turn Jim over to the shore, even if he will "go to hell" for freeing him. Huck, like Henry can only retain his self-worth by rejecting the disintegrative forces external to his pastoral realm.

Roy Tucker does not experience the alienation from the larger society that Henry and Huck do. Fan reaction is reduced to comic caricature. In his second season, Roy becomes familiar with fans when he shifts to the outfield:

... he became ... used to ... the nearness of the fans, not to mention their eccentricities in various cities. There was the queer old lady in St. Louis, who sat in the bleachers to whinny all through each game ... In Pittsburgh, a man with a tremendous bellow invariably sat in a box behind the Pirate dugout roaring with a zest that sent other occupants scurrying away ... but the worst of all was Al the Milkman. (K.T., p. 285)

Roy silences the Milkman, who is particularly hard on young players, by letting a foul ball hit him. In the scene, the vicious Al is reduced to a comic buffoon:
Roy instantly saw the ball was going into the stands about halfway up and near his persecutor. 'Take off your hat!' he shouted.

Standing in his seat, the cowbell waving, Al removed his straw hat with a flourish of delight, just in time to receive the ball on his shiny bald pate, a blow which knocked him over and out. (K.T., p. 289)

Aside from this incident, the fans are seen in a positive light, until at the climax of the novel they actually become unified with the players and the pastoral setting. After Roy's heroic catch, fans, players, and field fade into oneness: "Dusk descended upon a mass of players, on a huge crowd pouring onto the field, on a couple of men carrying an inert form through the mob on a stretcher . . ." (K.T., p. 353).

Harmony also exists in player-owner relations in The Kid from Tomkinsville. Roy has no conflict with Jack McManus, the owner of the team. McManus, a former athlete and now successful businessman, actually shows compassion for Roy when Roy asks him for train fare home from Florida if he is cut during spring training. McManus tells Roy, "'Well, I shouldn't worry if I were you. We'll see you land someplace. Maybe if we can't use you there'll be a spot for you on one of our farms . . . . And don't worry about getting home, understand?'" (K.T., p. 28). This humanitarian image is reinforced by the picture of the team before the crucial final game. Literally and figuratively, Jack McManus stands behind the players. In Roy Tucker's world, the fans and owner represent loyalty and support, and they contribute to the unity of the pastoral setting.

Henry Wiggen completes the integration with the game and summarizes
fans for refusing to tour Korea and entertain United States troops there. His public disapproval of the war made him a target of fan resentment, which was intensified by a sharply critical newspaper article attacking Henry as being unpatriotic and egotistical. Henry strikes back in the "Dedication" when he calls the fans who believed the article "boobs and flatheads." He shows his disgust for the fans in a more dramatically visible manner during the World Series opener. With the fans catcalling and booing him, Henry pitches out of a tight spot. As the inning-ending double play is completed, he recalls, "I turned to the crowd first to the first base side and then to the third base side, and I give them the old sign--I finger up" (T.S., p. 322). With this single defiant gesture, Henry parts company with the fans and asserts his independence from them.

The other segment of the larger society which threatens Henry is the Moors family, the owners of the team. The Moors family represents the machine's intrusion into the Edenic garden of the pastoral world. The family fortune is in automobile manufacturing, and the team is part of their corporate empire. In just one season, Henry realizes the threat they pose to the pastoral ideal. In their obsession with winning and generating capital, they run the team like they do an automobile plant. Players are treated coldly and impersonally, like cogs in a machine. When Henry refuses to go to Korea, he is asked by Patricia Moors, the Mammoth's vice-president, to submit a written apology (she prepared it herself) to the media, not for his sake, but for a higher purpose: "'It is the organization that must be kept free of scandal. You are part of the organization'" (T.S., p. 320). Henry replies, "'I am part of nothing.'"
his assertion of independence when he tells sportswriter Krazy Kress, "'I know only 1 thing. I know that from here on in I play baseball for the kicks and the cash only . . . I bust my ass for no man'" (T.S., p. 314). He is now worthy of Holly, who, having rejected his proposals throughout the season, recognizes that Henry is a changed man. Her insight convinces Henry that he has succeeded in his first full year. Back home in Perkinsville after the season is over, Henry is disappointed with the season's outcome: "After he [Henry talking about himself] done everything there was to do . . . all the kick was gone. You dream and you dream and you dream, and then when the dream comes true it falls flat on its face (T.S., p. 324). He feels that while the season was successful statistically, something was lacking. But Holly disputes this: "'What they [the statistics] do not show is that you growed to manhood this summer . . . . You will never be an island in the empire of Moors, Henry, and that is the great victory that hardly anybody wins any more'" (T.S., pp. 324-5). In Holly's eyes, Henry is now self-complete. She proudly asserts, "'Henry the navigator has come home at last'" (T.S., p. 324).
CONCLUSION

The Southpaw embodies the pastoral and Adamic myths of traditional American literature and adolescent baseball fiction. These patterns are developed through Henry Wiggen.

Henry, like Huckleberry Finn, recognizes the corruption of the natural world and refuses to identify with it, preferring to stand alone and retain self-respect rather than stand with it and become a nonentity. Like Huck, he debunks the myth of large social intimacy, the myth of ultimate unity of forces within and without the pastoral world, and, most significantly, the myth of recapturing the garden in its earlier unspoiled state. As Mark Harris says about his study of Mark Twain under Henry Nash Smith at the University of Minnesota:

I was moved now by his [Twain's] presence, his nearness . . . he came alive, and I saw for the first time that Mark Twain and I were living in the same America in the same essential time . . . that we all lived, and we were all dead.28

Yet, Henry Wiggen not only survives, he triumphs in the American pastoral setting. He achieves things that real ballplayers have never done. He wins 26 games; no rookie in major league history has ever won that many. He pitches in an all-star game and gives up only one run in three innings. He pitches and wins the game that clinches the pennant for the Mammoths. He wins two games in the World Series, which the Mammoths also win. In the off-season, he is selected Most Valuable Player and Player of the Year by the sports writers.
It is in his immense success within the pastoral world that Henry parts company with Huck. Huck's triumph is moral; Henry's is moral and physical. Huck, his dignity intact, lights out for the territory. Henry, too, rescues his dignity, but at the same time achieves fame for his phenomenal pitching records. He will not light out, for he has established a degree of moral and physical dominance over his world.

In his physical triumph, Henry not only approaches Roy Tucker, he surpasses him. Henry's success is even more spectacular than Roy's. By transcending a classic adolescent hero like Roy, Henry continues the romantically idealized tradition of the rookie hero.

Mark Harris, in borrowing from the American pastoral and Adamic traditions and from the heroic tradition of adolescent baseball fiction, constructs in The Southpaw a debunked pastoral world while retaining a heroic Adamic protagonist. Through Henry Wiggen, he keeps the myth of self-completion and success alive in a menaced pastoral world.
Notes


2 A comprehensive treatment of the American Adamic tradition is given in R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955). For this study his definition of the Adamic figure will suffice: "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources" (p. 5).


5 Vincent, p. 94.

The concept of an idyllic pasture as the playing area was challenged in the 1960s, when teams began playing on artificial grass. Beginning with Houston in 1966, eight other major league teams installed artificial playing surfaces between 1966 and 1977.

Talamini and Page, eds., p. 104.

Talamini and Page, eds., p. 105.


Vincent, p. 113.

Vincent, p. 121.


Seymour, p. 5.

Seymour, p. 6.

Seymour, p. 92.

Seymour, p. 92.

Seymour, p. 92.
20 Seymour, p. 93.

21 Seymour, p. 93.

22 Two of Tunis's books, The Kid from Tomkinsville (1940), and Rookie of the Year (1944), deal directly with the heroic rise of a young American male in the world of baseball. Variations of the heroic theme are present in several other novels by Tunis. The Kid Comes Back (1946), a sequel to The Kid from Tomkinsville, traces the return of Roy Tucker to baseball after World War II. Highpockets (1948), deals with the concept of selfishness versus team play. In each of these novels, the young protagonist overcomes significant obstacles to his success and, in each case, performs a heroic act which wins the pennant for his team.

23 Seymour, p. 97.

24 For the sake of simplifying references to the three works examined in this section of the study, The Southpaw will be designated by "T.S." Page numbers listed are those which appear in Mark Harris's Henry Wiggen's Books (New York: Avon Books, 1977). The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn will be designated by "H.F." Page numbers are those which appear in The Portable Mark Twain (New York: Viking Press, 1946). References to The Kid from Tomkinsville will be designated by "K.T." Page numbers are those which appear in The Kid from Tomkinsville (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1940).

25 Schafer, p. 30.

27 Weiss, p. 140.

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